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MAYOR EMANUEL TOURS ALBANY PARK STORM WATER DIVERSION PROJECT SITE

When Complete, Tunnel Will Have Capacity to Divert 2,300 Cubic Feet of Water per Second, Preventing Flooding That Has Devastated the Neighborhood Twice In Recent Years

Mayor Rahm Emanuel joined Alderman Margaret Laurino and Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) officials today to view the progress being made in the Albany Park storm water diversion project, which, when complete, will help alleviate the threat of catastrophic flooding in the area. The officials today witnessed the controlled blasting that is part of the project's second phase.

"In the last six years, we've had two 100-year storms that brought flooding to the Albany Park area. Residents should not have to live with a looming threat of life-disrupting flooding, and this project will help protect residents against the threat of flooding in the area," said Mayor Emanuel "Making these types of investments in our infrastructure is critical to the future success of our city. It represents an ongoing commitment to improving our neighborhoods and to improving the quality of life for our residents."

Phase Two of the storm diversion tunnel project officially began on March 21 with controlled blasting at the flood intake site, located at Springfield Avenue, just north of West Foster Avenue. The blasting will connect the flood intake shaft with a tunnel 150 feet below ground needed to divert storm water about 1.4 miles from the North Branch of the Chicago River to the North Shore Channel.

"The progress we are making on this project means that residents will soon be able to look forward to spring rains without fearing its floods," said Alderman Laurino.

"Community residents have been as much a part of this process as anyone, and I want to thank them for their ongoing patience and support."

Controlled blasting will continue to take place approximately every other day between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. A warning siren will sound 10 minutes prior to each blast to notify residents.

During the past six months, controlled blasting has occurred at the eastern end of the tunnel project, creating a hole dropping 150 feet below street level, and wide enough to build the tunnel boring machine that will ultimately do the drilling work underground.

Once completed, the 18-foot diameter tunnel will have an inlet shaft at a bend in the river in Eugene Field Park just east of Pulaski Road. It will activate before the water level reaches flood stage and divert a flow of 2,300 cubic feet of water per second, bypassing Albany Park and emptying at an outlet shaft at River Park just south of Foster Avenue into the North Shore Channel.

“By this time next year, we will have a flood diversion system that can handle spring rains and thaws and do so without disrupting life in this community,” said CDOT Commissioner Rebekah Scheinfeld. “These are the types of infrastructure improvements we know positively impact people’s lives and these are the improvements we are committed to making.”

The Albany Park Stormwater Diversion Tunnel is a joint project of the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Metropolitan Water and Reclamation District (MWRD) made possible through federal, state, and local funds.

In addition to the storm water diversion tunnel, the project will also add improvements to Field Park at the western end of the tunnel, including landscaping, new trees, a new walkway, benches and a water fountain, and improvements to River Park at the eastern end of the project, including landscaping, new trees, a new soccer field and a new regulation-sized baseball field and diamond with a backstop fence and batting cage.

The project is expected to be completed by May of 2018.

Since 2008, Albany Park has experienced two major floods that have affected hundreds of homes in the northwest side community along the North Branch of the Chicago River. After the last round of serious flooding in April 2013, Mayor Emanuel pledged the city would address the problem in a comprehensive way and directed CDOT to move forward with design and engineering of a drainage tunnel. The approximately \$70 million project will produce an estimated 250 construction jobs.

City crews closely monitor the water level in the North Branch and have installed jersey barriers and sand bags at locations along the river that are prone to flooding.

Mayor Emanuel first began working on this issue when he served as U.S. Congressman, representing the Illinois’s 5th congressional district that included Albany Park.

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